

Stockton's Urban Forest

A Rain or Shine Job, With Muscles



What does it take to manage Stockton's 100,000 city trees? A whole lot of work, for starters. When you think rain or shine, forget about that mailman in shorts with a nice hat for shade. Think about the guy up in the bucket truck operating a chain saw at noon on a day forecast at 102 degrees. Or maybe the crew that gets called out at 3 a.m. during a blustery winter storm to cut up trees that have fallen in huge puddles on the road. Now *that's* rain or shine muscle.

Eighteen full-time personnel do it all. Tree Workers are the newest guys on a crew. They plant trees, operate equipment, chip and clean up a work sites. Tree Surgeons are the middleman. They perform tasks in all aspects of tree work.

Senior Tree Surgeons are crew leaders. Working tree crews report to the Tree Maintenance Supervisor, who monitors staffing, equipment and daily items such as implementation of tree trimming schedules. Also in the Tree Division are two Arborists. Arborists are responsible for the identification and modification of field techniques, and issues dealing with species or disease in the urban forest. If a citizen has a question about a city tree, an Arborist is the one who usually responds.

The Tree Division starts the day early, reporting to the corporation yard at 6 a.m. to pick up equipment, orders and head into the field. Each trimming crew is equipped with an aerial tower (bucket truck or cherry picker), which is used for most trimming. The tower is equipped with a hydraulic saw that considerably cuts down the noise of trimming so neighbors aren't unduly bothered by the crew's work. The 60-foot towers allow crew members to work comfortably in the crown of a tree. Crews also go out with a six-ton crane used to lift wood and heavy debris (average daily use, 5-10 tons), a chip truck and chipper. Crews average two tons of chopped limbs, leaves and tree debris each day. Various other pieces of equipment are called for as well: chain saws, various sizes, pole saws, power pruners and standard loppers.

Crews are assigned daily duties, by priority, throughout the city and its seven tree maintenance districts. Back in the office, a database provides an inventory of each tree within a district, recorded by street address. The address is used to monitor maintenance and citizen requests for the lifespan of each tree.

While some emergency tree work arises, most of tree work in our sprawling urban forest is routine district trimming of street trees. Along with trimming, each three-man crew

also performs tree removal and other minor tree duties. Once a district is complete the crew is forwarded to the next district.

Acting as a problem solver, a roving emergency crew acts promptly to situations requiring immediate assistance. Following an office-generated list, the emergency crew performs a variety of duties requested through the Parks and Recreation Department from individual property owners and city departments.

A small tree crew is devoted to the planting and maintenance of new and young trees. You will see these individuals trimming small trees from the ground, planting during the appropriate season or removing small dead trees. This crew utilizes the water trucks for the watering of tree wells and newly planted trees. Stump removal is performed with a stump grinder. A large piece of equipment, stump grinding is extensive and is performed along side the planting crew to ensure replanting occurs.

As a result of tremendous support for the urban forest from the Stockton City Council, the Parks and Recreation Department's Tree Division is also assisted by outside contractors who help maintain the city's tree trimming schedule. Arboricultural groups statewide recognize Stockton's award-winning tree program and Stockton was recently touted as one of the best cities in the West to live because of its excellent urban forestry program. Thanks are in order for the 18 guys who are dedicated to our city trees!



Tree Division

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